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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
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News Release



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SERVICE TO HOLD INFORMATIONAL MEETING ON PROPOSED RULE TO HELP CONSERVE WESTERN SNOWY PLOVERS

Public meeting to be held Thursday, June 15 in Ventura, Calif.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will hold an informal public meeting Thursday, June 15, 2006, in Ventura to discuss a proposed rule that would support and enhance local conservation efforts for the western snowy plover, a species listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA).

The meeting will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. at the Ventura Fish and Wildlife Office, Santa Cruz Room, 2471 Portola Road, and staff will be available to provide information. The Service will accept written comments and information until June 20, 2006.

In April of this year the agency announced a finding that the western snowy plover remains at risk from habitat loss, human disturbances and other perils and should retain its status as a threatened species under the ESA.

In completing the in-depth review of the status of the bird, the Service found that significant progress has been made toward recovery of the species, and proposed a rule that would support and enhance local conservation efforts. The rule—known as a “special rule” under section 4(d) of the ESA—would allow some incidental loss, or “take” of western snowy plovers within counties that meet Breeding Bird Management Goals as specified in the draft recovery plan for the western snowy plover.

The proposed rule can be found at: <http://ventura.fws.gov> under “Information & Education” as described in the April 21 news release. Comments, information and suggestions may be sent to the Field Supervisor (Attn: WSP-4d), Arcata Fish and Wildlife Office, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1655 Heindon Road, Arcata, California 95521 or by fax at 707-822-8411.

The western population of the tiny shorebird that breeds in coastal areas in California, Oregon and Washington has been listed as threatened since 1983. The current population estimate for the U.S. portion of the Pacific Coast population is about 2,300, based on a 2005 survey. The largest number of breeding birds occurs south of San Francisco Bay to southern Baja. It is classified as a “distinct population segment” under the ESA, separate from populations that nest in inland areas from Nevada and Utah to Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting and enhancing fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 95-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System, which encompasses 545 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands and other special management areas. It also operates 69 national fish hatcheries, 63 Fish and Wildlife Management offices and 81 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts. It also oversees the Federal Assistance program, which distributes hundreds of millions of dollars in excise taxes on fishing and hunting equipment to state fish and wildlife agencies.

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